



## The Religions Book

*Shulamit Ambalu (Contributor), Michael D. Coogan, Eve Levavi Feinstein, Paul Freedman, Neil Philip, Andrew Stob*

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Surveying the world's religions and providing succinct yet thought-provoking insight into the philosophy and practices of each, The Religions Book is ideal for anyone seeking to gain a better understanding of the world's religions.

With intriguing artwork, flow charts, and diagrams, complex ideas are made accessible in this comprehensive guide. The Religions Book is also perfect for religion and philosophy students.

## The Religions Book Details

Date : Published July 15th 2013 by DK Publishing

ISBN : 9781465408433

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Format : Hardcover 352 pages

Genre : Religion, Nonfiction, Reference, History, Philosophy

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## **From Reader Review The Religions Book for online ebook**

### **Martin says**

This, and others in the same series, have been sat on my bookshelf for a couple of years and I thought it was time to read one. Although it did lose me in a couple of places, on the whole the book was interesting and definitely a valuable reading experience. I feel I have a clearer understanding of the world's religions now and a better appreciation of the causes of some of today's conflicts and issues.

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### **Connie says**

This is a wonderful book for learning of the many different religions world wide. It is in an easy to read format. Each chapter has to do with a different religion or a different branch of a religion. Easy to stop and pick it back up. I did not realize how diverse Buddhism and Hinduism were. India's religious history was fascinating. I found this book enlightening and interesting. I recommend it for anyone interested in the diversity of the world's religions.

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### **Alex Kartelias says**

A very good introduction to religion. What's special about it is that it focuses on certain themes of each religion, while giving a general summary of its history at the beginning of each religion. I think the book accomplishes its goal by picking out the distinct characteristics of these religions- while occasionally illuminating the similarities they share. Does not serve as a complete source of information, but due to its recency and enjoyable format, this book does serve as a excellent entrance into the fascinating study of religion.

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### **Fadillah says**

This is well written book. Every religion is sorted according to time of their emergence. Every page is so colorful and comprises with side notes, pictures and illustrations. I do think everybody should read it. This is an excellent book to understand every religion in every angle and aspect of it.

Correction on the page 265 :

\*every Muslim baby will be recited prayer call (Azan for male, Iqamat for female) not shahadah as stated in the book . (Please correct me if the practices is vary in other country).

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### **Christiane says**

A very interesting overview of the major and minor religions, sects and cults past and present.

The first sentence in the “Directory” states that “despite the apparent prevalence of atheism in the West, the number of people professing some kind of religious belief is increasing worldwide.” While this may or may not be true, I think it would have been interesting if the book had included a chapter on those who through the ages have rejected religion and given a voice to the champions of atheism in the West today (Richard Dawkins, the late Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Stephen Hawking, etc.).

P.S. As is the case with all the books in this series, reading it on a Kindle is not ideal as the page layout gets lots and the graphics are too small.

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### **Paul Bryant says**

When some nomads started staying put and growing some taters & turnips around 10,000 BCE they became acutely aware of the weather and they needed to contact whoever was in charge of rain and sunshine and get a little co-operation going. They figured just because you can't see something doesn't mean it's not there. So, for instance, the wind. These invisible things – let's call them spirits – were just everywhere, and they were running wild. But some people could talk to them, and make deals. You do this for us, we'll do that for you. So that was the concept of sacrifice. Here's a goat, now give me a wife. Alright, two goats. Arm-twister! Hey, don't snow all over my cabbage patch, here's a donkey.

Some of it wasn't no donkeys either. It turns out that the grisly heads rolling down the ziggurat scenes in Mel Gibson's Apocalypto movie were factually correct. Ugh!

Some bold types called shamen took strong medicine and went across to the spirit world and returned with very specific knowledge (the necklace you lost is behind front door of your neighbour's hut – not saying how it could possibly have got there).

Oh, humans have spirits too, and the good news is, they're immortal. Actually, the land and the spirits and the creatures and the humans are all part of each other, it's like that crazy novel The City and the City by China Mieville, these different worlds all co-terminous in the same place and interweaving and all.

Well, several thousand years passed and spirits in some places became gods and got specific powers and tights and capes to wear too, and city states grew up all over, their kings were divine or divinely chosen, and the people believed that tosh because the priests told them it was true. That happened in the USSR under Stalin too, so it's an idea which took a long time to die out.

This excellent book then moves on to the oldest living religion, Hinduism, followed by Buddhism (which might not be a religion, it's much more a philosophy), Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the three great monotheisms. Finally we get a miscellaneous section which tears through Sikhs, Santeria, Mormons, Baha'I, Tenrikyo, Cargo Cults (which have now disappeared), Jehovah's Witnesses, Rastafari, Cai Dai, Scientology, Unification Church, Wicca, TM, UUA, Krishna Consciousness and Falun Dafa. They all go by so rapidly that I'm not sure the subtleties of each faith are adequately explained - the Unification Church appears just to believe that everyone should get married, for instance. I think there must be more to it than that.

But mainly the nine authors of this classy compendium can cheerfully collect compliments and congratulations for their collectively crisp, cool, calm compression of these copious complex, confusing and contrary concepts.

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### **Nada says**

I've been looking for a book like this for a long time and I'm glad I found this book. This book cover a major sections and introduced me to a new beliefs and myths and its easy to read with nice diagrams and illustration.

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### **Alejandro says**

#### **Priceless book! - ¡Libro invaluable!**

*This review is bilingual. You will find first the review in English and after that, you will find the review in Spanish.*

*Esta crítica es bilingüe. Usted encontrará primero la crítica en Inglés y luego de esta, usted encontrará la crítica en Español.*

#### **RELIGIOUS(LY) READING**

The first thing that comes to mind is a quote from the novel *Virgin* by Mary Elizabeth Murphy (aka F. Paul Wilson): ***God created Faith to unite us, but Man created Religion to separate us.***

Because even within several of the most popular religions that worship the same God, there are several subgroups that generate separations within the same religion.

I was looking for this book for a while and I am very happy to have finally found it, since the book is as good (if not better) as I imagined it. And at an affordable price, thanks to the fact that it is published by DK, which is usually a suitable combination of hardcover, prestige paper in full color, but at a reasonable price.

*The Book of Religions*, as the title indicates, is a book where you can find the origin and the most punctual elements, such as sacred texts, founders and relevant preachers, central ideas, evolution and ramification, key chronology, highlighting geography, average census of adepts, significant divisions, etc... of the majority of the most popular religions in history, such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, but also primitive beliefs, as well as modern religions.

By having all those beliefs and religions in the same book, it is very practical to see certain similarities between them, and to note relevant coincidences such as the 6th Century B.C., it was a key moment in history where most religions consolidated to start creating their own impacts around the world.

This is an essential book for all those interested in knowing about the other religions that exist and/or existed, but also to learn a little more about their own religion, whatever it may be. Definitely it is a lot of overwhelming information to be able to fully understand it in the first read, so I have no doubt that I will be returning to this book many times to read it again.

And do not forget that in the end, the most important thing is to have faith in God (no matter what you call the Higher Power in which you believe) and seek to live in peace with your peers.

### **LECTURA RELIGIOSA(MENTE)**

Lo primero que se me viene a la mente esa una frase de la novela *Virgin* por Mary Elizabeth Murphy (aka F. Paul Wilson): ***Dios creó la Fé para unirnos, pero el Hombre creó la Religión para separarnos.*** .

Ya que inclusive dentro de varias de las religiones más populares que adoran al mismo Dios, existen varios sub-grupos que generan separaciones dentro de una misma religión.

Anduve detrás de este libro y me alegra mucho haberlo encontrado finalmente, ya que el libro es tan bueno (sino es que mejor) como me lo imaginaba. Y además a un precio accesible, gracias a que es publicado por DK, que usualmente es una combinación idónea de pasta dura, papel prestige a todo color, pero a un precio razonable.

*El Libro de las Religiones* como el título lo indica, es un libro donde puedes encontrar el origen y los elementos más puntuales, tales como textos sagrados, fundadores y predicadores relevantes, ideas centrales, evolución y ramificación, cronología clave, geografía resaltante, censo promedio de adeptos, divisiones significantes, etc... de la mayoría de las religiones más populares en la historia, tales como Cristianismo, Judaísmo, Islamismo, Budismo, Hinduismo, pero también creencias primitivas, así como religiones modernas.

Al tener todas esas creencias y religiones en el mismo libro, es muy práctico ver ciertas similitudes entre ellas, y notar coincidencias relevantes como que el Siglo VI A.C. fue un momento clave en la historia donde la mayoría de las religiones se consolidaron para empezar a crear sus propios impactos alrededor del mundo.

Este es un libro esencial para todos aquellos interesados en conocer sobre las otras religiones que existen y/o existieron, pero también aprender un poco más de su propia religión sea cual sea. Definitivamente es una cantidad de información abrumante como para poder entenderla totalmente en la primera leída, por lo que no dudo que estaré regresando a este libro muchas veces para volver a leerlo.

Y no olviden que al final, lo más importante es tener fe en Dios (no importa cómo le llamen al Poder Superior en el cual crean) y busquen vivir en paz con sus semejantes.

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### **Rachel Rogers says**

This book was very informative and easy to digest, while also being respectful of all the different religions and branches of those religions included. I noticed early on that for each section, the language was such that

the tenants or stories of each of the belief systems was fact. Not a whole lot of qualifiers (i.e. According to this myth, the god supposedly did xyz.) just straightforward telling.

With so many different religions to cover, this saves time and makes the whole book easier to read. And comes across very respectful as well. As a believer in one of the included religions myself, I appreciated that very much.

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## **The Time Traveler says**

### **Sides of a Die**

This is a collection of the world's most common and historical religions. Reading the encyclopedic text shows us that from the beginning of humankind there has been a belief in the spiritual and supernatural. By analyzing different cultures and geographic regions a picture that when compartmentalized appears conflicting; but, when put on display all at once shows how similar the spiritual beliefs are to one another. Religions fit like different puzzle pieces to the same puzzle or different sides of the same dice. Most lead to the divine (usually a Creator) and include beliefs in a continuance of life after death; whether eternal life or reincarnation. The path of leading a moral (one of self improvement) is similar in the differing religions: to practice peace, to love one another despite differences, to help the unfortunate, and to play a role in creating a compassionate society seems to be the collective goal. By living simply, fairly, and in awareness that there is more meaning to life than individualism and materialism, as secular culture leads many to believe, shows us that there is truly one path that arises above all.

As a Christ follower I share the following passage despite an evil agenda to divide brother from brother, despite ideological or theological differences; the day will come when we face death. A day that no matter belief is scientific recognition. So live a life of betterment.

A favorite passage is found in Matthew 25:

(I believe that by accepting this way of life a moral way is without prejudice despite differences that whether known in words but through actions God will judge and not by religious belief. "Blessed are the peacemakers)

32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave

me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

44 "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

45 "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

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### **Benjamin Jones says**

Perfect book for anyone looking to read about all of the world's religions. I had been looking for a book like this for a long time and this gave me everything I was looking for.

Great book.

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### **Gail Thompson says**

This book is really useful as a research tool. It covers religions from prehistory through to the modern day. Each religion is in a separate section that is clearly demarcated and often colour coded so that you can see a change from one to the other. There are pictures, diagrams and even time lines to help in understanding the basics of the religion in question. The text is broken into easily digestible chunks to help comprehension. Over all, this is a great starting point for anyone who wants to know more about religion and has been useful in my own research.

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### **Chris says**

This was an interesting book. Sort of an encyclopedia of religion, the book presents basic religious ideas, from many different traditions, in easily digestible articles. There are major sections on the five major religions of humanity (Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and several section with articles based on beliefs of other religious traditions. Based on my seminary background, I was surprised at the breadth and depth of coverage of Christianity from both a doctrinal and historical perspective. I can only assume the coverage of the other religions is similar. I was amused when about Moses Maimonides' position that God has no attributes (essentially that God is incomprehensible) kept referring to God as "he". Wouldn't that imply that God has gender, which would be an attribute? In any case, this book is a decent source of information on many religious traditions and beliefs. Not an in depth treatment of any, but a good overview/survey source.

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## **Scout Collins says**

### **3.5 stars**

Informative book about different major religions.

This book was hard for me to get through for a few reasons. I'm not really interested in the very specific details of religion, so the textbook-style type paragraphs were boring and hard to finish. I have also mentioned this in my reviews of the other books in this series, but I'm not a fan of the format; it's not organized enough for me (yes, I'm that Type A).

For some topics the format works very well (e.g. for the Politics one) but for religion it seemed choppy and lacking of important aspects of the religions. The main 2 sections are Christianity and Islam, which have short 'chapters'/articles titled with things like "God Guides Us with Shari'a"--if you don't know what Shari'a is, those types of titles are unhelpful and you can't find what you're looking for.

I also wish the book clearly looked at different religions' stances on social issues like women's rights (e.g. abortion, divorces, etc.), LGTBQ rights, etc. and compared them.

I also was unhappy with the book's minimization of certain requirements of faiths.

Example (this is the only one I remember, but there were others too):

#### *"Jihad is Our Religious Duty*

...He argued that in the first stage, jihad towards others should be peaceful and passive. In the second stage, Islam should be defended with peaceful argument. The third stage allowed for followers to defend the Muslim community against injustice. In the fourth stage, Muslims are called on to engage in armed conflict, within specific legal guidelines and Qu'ranic guidelines, when the Islamic faith is under threat." (Ambalu, 278).

In other books, this would have been written like "To defend Islam, Muslims are encouraged to engage in violence."

Overall if you're interested in religion and interested in an introduction this is a decent book to start with.

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## **Ammar Wanli says**

Interesting book, more like encyclopaedia, nicely illustrated and organised. I could turn back to, and get some info about certain religion if needed.

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